



Democracy, Good Government and Development – Mexico and Latin America

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With your permission I'd like to start by saying hello to the Pedros, Juanitos, Sergios, Marias, and Lupitas who just served our tables. To them and all the Lupitas, the Marias, and the Pedros that are working in this nation my deepest respect. They are my heroes; they are a very special caste of Mexicans; they do represent our Mexico, with its values—specifically family values—with their commitments and loyalty to their country and to this great nation. They are an example to all of us in Mexico. They left their homes one day when they were kids, with tears in their eyes, saying goodbye to their mothers, their dads, their friends, leaving their own land not knowing where they were going, but they wanted to look for something better. This is the spirit of the immigrants. This is the spirit of those hundreds of thousands of Europeans that came through Ellis Island in New York, that came through the Ellis Island of Mexico, the port of Vera Cruz; that came to Argentina, that came to discover this great continent; that came to work and build nations—they're a very special caste of people.

My grandfather from Cincinnati, Ohio, back in 1895 did the same thing. He was working for his American dream, after his family participated in the war here in the States, after coming from Strasbourg and later from Ireland. He had a very special spirit. He took a horse, said goodbye to his mom and dad, and rode all the way down to Mexico and settled in Rancho San Cristobal and there he made his American dream. He came without a penny in his pocket; he came with that commitment to work to build a better future for his family. Today, those things have lasted at Rancho San Cristobal. We meet every Sunday. The family value is the key value in Mexican society. Every Sunday there are 60, 70, 80 of us, the grandsons, the granddaughters, our sons, our nephews, our brothers, our aunts and that's the home that he built long ago.

That is why migration is massive. It's a force, it's pure energy, it's loyalty to a commitment; it's looking to accomplish your dreams in life.

That was the spirit of the first Jesuits; their faith would have identified each and every one as a leader. When you are all alone, sometimes for months, when you're alone, then you know you're a leader and you know where you want to go. That's why San Francisco Javier went all the way to China and others went to other parts of Asia, to India, to Latin America, everywhere, they had that power within called leadership. Maybe they didn't know too many things but they were sent around the world and they did their jobs.

The Mexicans, Guatemalans, Salvadorians, Bangladeshis, Indians that are here in the states are doing the same. They're working for this economy, they're bringing quality of life to this nation, and they're making this economy competitive.

That's why we don't understand why a leading nation—I am part of this nation—but I can never understand why its leader is building walls. What is this nation afraid of? In front of the Berlin Wall President Reagan shouted loud and clear, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” That's what should happen to this wall that is being built to divide two nations when we should be building bridges—bridges of understanding, bridges of love. Where is the United States going to export its products to if you're building a wall? Many people don't know that Mexico buys more products and services from the United States than Italy, Germany, Britain, and France put together. We Mexicans account for millions, literally millions, of jobs for U.S. citizens here by trading with this great nation. So we must have a new vision, we must keep working as friends and neighbors, in this partnership we have that is bringing competition to this economy. We see more and more North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) corporations that are putting one foot in Mexico, one in the States and one in Canada. They nourish the best of the capacities that we have and that's the only way to compete today with Asia, with China. Goldman Sachs has forecasted for the year 2040 that China's economy will be the largest in the world and that the United States will drop to second place. Japan, who is in second place today, will drop to third, India will become fourth and Mexico will be fifth. But human beings with leadership can change things and the United States can keep being the leader if it does the job that has to be done. It's that leadership that we miss in the rest of the world, that leadership that called upon all of Europe with the Marshall Plan. Today Europe is what it is because of that great idea that was generated in this nation. Today we communicate through the Internet and we are now on a global communication capacity thanks to the genius of Bill Gates.

The United States and Mexico have a challenge. Mexico is the bridge to Latin America. Mexico is bridging Latin American products and Latin American people to connect with this great nation. Together we can build a great continent and we can work together to defeat the evil of drugs that is ruining our youth, that is harming the best of what we have for the future. Mexico is not to be blamed for the drug cartels, for the killings, for the drugs crossing through Mexico to come to the United States. It is a joint responsibility. Drug consumption in the United States is huge, it's the largest drug market in the world. We Mexicans happen to be in-between this huge market of drugs [from] the south, in Venezuela, Columbia, and Bolivia. Mexico was clean of drugs and through that trafficking in transportation of drugs Mexico has become a drug-producing country. By joining this great effort that we're doing together, the United States and Mexico, by restraining drugs from crossing the border, those drugs are now being sold in Mexico and that means being sampled for free by our Mexican youth. We're paying the price of being in-between the market and the producers. That has to be stopped and President Calderon is doing what he has to do. He's a young person, a Harvard graduate, strong character, he and we in Mexico are going to win that battle. It's going to take time, it's tough right now, we are undergoing a war at this point in time but there is no doubt that we will win that war, more so if we work together in that joint responsibility and challenge that we have between Mexico and the United States.

The economy is difficult today, but Latin America has come back to levels of growth of over five percent as a region, which we hadn't enjoyed since as far back as 1950 or 1960. Americans say why is Mexico not recalling its people? Why do Mexicans cross the border? Why can't their government offer them jobs and an opportunity? The answer, to me, is clear. Latin American nations during the 20th century were in the hands of military dictators—who doesn't remember Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Salvador, and Nicaragua? Everywhere there were corrupt governments, authoritarian governments and no democracies, and control of the economy by the state, no free market economy. And the end result is what we have today. So we must change things for the 21st century. Fortunately, the people of Latin America decided to get rid of dictators and we did it in the '80s and '90s. All Latin American countries, got rid of dictators and

went through the painful process of economic reforms, which affected the poor more than anybody. But those economic reforms are now working. Today we know they work. Today we know that democracy and freedom is the base on which you can find success for economies, where you can produce, grow and develop human capital. If you don't have democracy and freedom, you don't have stability and you cannot construct the kind of nation that we want to construct.

At this point in time, there are some leaders in some nations that want to take Latin America back to the past, to what we already went through and what we know doesn't work. Populism doesn't work, demagoguery doesn't work, cheating the people, authoritarian governments or messianic movements don't work.

So we have to work hard to build a successful Latin America in this 21st century and what we need is to see throughout Latin America leadership, leaders in economy, leaders in business, leaders in education, leaders in culture, leaders in politics, leaders in government. That is what very modestly Centro Fox is trying to accomplish. We're small, we're modest, but we are associating with those who have the leadership, the capacity, and the positive attitude needed to put together a net of universities, a net of research and think tanks. I've met people who are willing to change things in Latin America. This is a difficult charter that we have selected—discovering the leadership that each one of us has within. It is incredible how you face a kid and say, "you're a leader and you're going to be president," and when he is back at home with both his parents after somebody told him he was going to be president, he starts working on his development.

I see a bright future if this nation recovers its leadership, if this nation moves from conflict and intervention and starts leading to construct a better world, if this nation comes back to those great moving ideas that it had in the past. This nation taught us and all the nations in the world, not long ago, that we should open our borders, that we should open our markets for U.S. corporations and U.S. investment. Look what has happened now—the leader backs off, the leader builds walls, the leader imposes duties on its imports, the leader says no more jobs outside the United States. That's not the leader I knew, that's not the leader my grandfather knew, that's not the American dream, the American dream is equal opportunities for everyone. The American dream is you work and you get what you deserve. The American dream is freedom for everyone.

Thank you very much for being here with us and God bless you.

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